

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SSC-01 /053 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9774  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2803

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SP  
SUBJECT: RESIGNATION OF NAVY MINISTER BROUGHT ON BY PCE LEGALIZATION

1. IN A CURIOUSLY DELAYED REACTION THE NAVY MINISTER, PITA DA VEIGA, HAS RESIGNED (CONFIRMED TO THE DEFENSE ATTACHE) IN PROTEST AGAINST THE LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. THERE WERE ALSO REPORTS THAT AIR MINISTER, CARLOS FRANCO IRIBARNEGARAY, WOULD RESIGN AND THAT THE ARMY MINISTER, ALVAREZ ARENAS, MIGHT BE CONTEMPLATING RESIGNATION. IN FACT, BARRING ANOTHER CHANGE OF HEART, IT SEEMS THAT ONLY PITA DA VEIGA WILL RESIGN, THE AIR MINISTER HAVING BEEN PERSUADED BY THE KING TO STAY ON AND ALVAREZ ARENAS HAVING MADE NO MOVE, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, TO RESIGN. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, SUAREZ DID MEET WITH THE MILITARY MINISTERS, AND OF COURSE, THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT GUTIERREZ MELLADO, SEVERAL TIMES LAST WEEK ON THE NECESSITY OF LEGALIZING THE PARTY. GUTIERREZ MELLADO REPORTEDLY AGREED, THE AIR MINISTER REMAINED SILENT AND THE NAVY AND ARMY MINISTERS ARGUED AGAINST IT. ALSO ACCORDING TO DEFENSE ATTACHE SOURCES, THEY AGREED TO KEEP THEIR DISAGREEMENTS QUIET AND GO ALONG WITH THE GOVT DECISION.

2. A KEY, AND TO DATE NOT SATISFACTORILY ANSWERED QUESTION, IS WHY, AFTER APPARENTLY AGREEING TO KEEP SILENT, ONE MINISTER SHOULD HAVE RESIGNED AND ANOTHER POSSIBLY CONTEMPLATED RESIGNATION  
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SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE FACT. ACCOUNTS VARY, THOUGH THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY EXCLUSIVE AND ALL HAVE THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF RIGHTWING PRESSURE FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. ONE VERSION PLACES EMPHASIS ON THE "TRICKY" WAY THAT THE LEGALIZATION WAS ACCOMPLISHED CASTING DOUBTS ABOUT THE FORM AND LEGALITY AS WELL AS RAISING THE USUAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE. ANOTHER HAS IT THAT PITA DA VEIGA WAS PRESSURED BY HIS CONSERVATIVE

SUBORDINATES. A THIRD DEDUCES A DELAYED REACTION TO THE COMMUNIST DEMONSTRATIONS ON SUNDAY WHERE PCE MEMBERS DROVE AROUND TOWN WITH LARGE RED FLAGS FROM THEIR CARS.

3. WE HAVE ASSUMED IN RECENT MONTHS, SINCE THE REFERENDUM AND THE EARLIER REPLACEMENT OF SPANISH BUNKER GENERALS IN KEY POSITIONS THAT THE MILITARY WOULD BE PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH ANYTHING REASONABLE SO LONG AS PUBLIC ORDER OR THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY OF SPAIN WAS NOT THREATENED. THESE SURPRISE DEVELOPMENTS REQUIRE AN EXAMINATION OF ASSUMPTIONS, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT IT MAY BE FOR INDIVIDUAL MILITARY OFFICERS TO SWALLOW THE NOTICE OF THE LEGALIZATION OF THE PCE THERE REALLY IS NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE MONARCHY AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS. (EUROPA PRESS REPORTS THAT THE ARMY'S SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL IN DISCUSSING THE ISSUE EXPRESSED "REPULSION" BUT OF COURSE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE GOS.) IN ALL THIS IT IS THE ARMY WHICH REMAINS THE KEY, WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THE CONTINUED LOYALTY TO THE KING NOT ONLY OF GUTIERREZ MELLADO BUT OF ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VEGA AND THE OFFICERS WHO HOLD OPERATIONAL COMMAND. THE FAR RIGHT CAN TAKE SATISFACTION FROM THE RESIGNATION OF THE ONE SERVICE MINISTER WHOSE TENURE DATES TO THE CARRERO BLANCO ERA, AND THE RIGHT MAY PROVOKE PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS, PERHAPS FEEDING UPON DEMONSTRATION APPARENTLY PLANNED FOR TOMORROW'S APRIL 14 REPUBLICAN ANNIVERSARY BY SMALL EXTREME LEFTIST GROUPS. WE NOT IN THIS RESPECT THAT SNATIAGO CARILLO HAS APPARENTLY GIVEN ORDERS TO THE PCE TO KEEP QUIET AND NOT DO ANYTHING THAT COULD BE SIEZED UPON AS A PROVOCATION.

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4. MORE GENERALLY THE POLITICAL CLASS--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ALIANZA POPULAR WHERE FRAGA HAS RAILED AGAINST THE DECISION--HAS RALLIED TO THE SUPPORT OF SUAREZ AND THE MILITARY RUBLING MAY SERVE AS A STIMULUS TO THIS WEEK'S EFFORT TO PRODUCE GREATER POLITICAL COHERENCE IN THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THOUGH THE OTHER TWO MINISTERS ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN, ANOTHER SENIOR MILITARY RESIGNATION (E.G. PERHAPS CAMPANO LOPEZ?) MIGHT POSSIBLY TAKE PLACE. THE GOS IS SENDING OUT REASSURING SIGNALS, AND A CONTACT IN THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD HAS INDICATED PRIVATELY THAT THINGS ARE CALMING DOWN. STABLER

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## Message Attributes

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